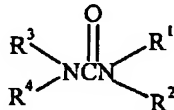


In the Claims:

1-15. (Canceled)

16. (New) A method for maintaining hydration of an aqueous polymer composition comprising:
admixing the aqueous polymer composition with from 0.01 to 50 percent by weight of one or more hydroxy compounds, based on the weight of the one or more hydroxy compounds to polymer solids of the aqueous polymer composition,
wherein the one or more hydroxy compounds are selected from the group consisting of hydroxyalkyl ureas, hydroxyalkyl amides and combinations thereof.
17. (New) The method according to claim 16 further comprising the step of applying the aqueous polymer composition to a substrate to maintain hydration of the substrate.
18. (New) The substrate of claim 17 further comprising non-wovens, fabrics, sponges, towels, mop heads, skin or hair.
19. (New) The method according to claim 16 wherein said aqueous polymer composition is admixed with from 1 to 10 percent by weight of one or more hydroxy compounds, based on weight of hydroxy compounds to polymer solids.
20. (New) The hydroxyalkyl urea and hydroxyalkyl amide compounds of claim 16 further comprising (hydroxyalkyl)urea, β -hydroxyalkyl amide, or combinations thereof.
21. (New) The β -hydroxyalkyl amide of claim 20 wherein the β -hydroxyalkyl amide is selected from the group consisting of bis[N,N-di(β -hydroxyethyl)] adipamide, bis[N,N-di(β -hydroxypropyl)] succinamide, N-2-hydroxyethylurea, bis[N,N-di(β -hydroxyethyl)] azelamide, bis[N,N-di(β -hydroxypropyl)] adipamide, bis[N-methyl-N-(β -hydroxyethyl)] oxamide and combinations thereof.

22. (New) The (hydroxyalkyl)urea and the β -hydroxyalkyl amide compounds of claim 20, the (hydroxyalkyl)urea having the structure



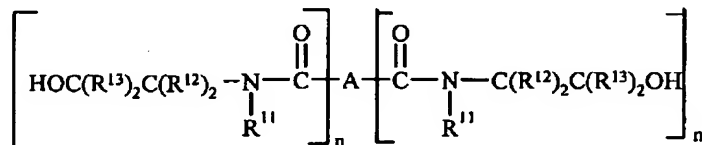
wherein R^1 is $\begin{array}{c} \text{R}^5 \\ | \\ \text{C} \text{---} \text{R}^7 \\ | \\ \text{R}^6 \end{array}$, R^2 is H or R^5 , R^3 is H or R^5 , and R^4 is H, R^1 , or R^5 ,

wherein R^5 is H, CH_2OH , CHCHOH , CHCHCHOH or C_1 - C_4 alkyl,

R^6 is H, CH_2OH , CHCHOH , CHCHCHOH or C_1 - C_4 alkyl, and

R^7 is H, CH_2OH , CHCHOH , CHCHCHOH or C_1 - C_4 alkyl,

wherein R^8 is H, methyl or ethyl, R^9 is H, methyl or ethyl, and R^{10} is H, methyl or ethyl; and the β -hydroxyalkyl amide having the structure



wherein A is a bond, a monovalent or polyvalent organic radical derived from a saturated or unsaturated alkyl containing from 1 to 60 carbon atoms, aryl, tri-lower alkylene amino or an ethylenically unsaturated radical; R^{11} is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, lower alkyl having 1 to 5 carbon atoms, and hydroxyalkyl having from 1 to 5 carbon atoms; R^{12} and R^{13} are independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, straight or branched chain lower alkyl having from 1 to 5 carbon atoms, and one of the R^{12} and R^{13} radicals joined together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached to form a cycloalkyl; n is an integer of 1 or 2 and n' is an integer of 0 to 2; n being 2 when n' is 0.

23. (New) The one or more hydroxy compound of claim 16 wherein the hydroxy compound is at least hydroxyalkyl urea and the hydroxyalkyl urea is selected from the group consisting of N,N-bis(2-hydroxyethyl)urea, tetrakis(2-hydroxyethyl)urea, tris(2-hydroxyethyl)urea, N,N'-bis(2-hydroxyethyl)urea, N,N'-bis(3-hydroxypropyl)urea, N,N'-bis(4-hydroxybutyl)urea, 2-urea-2-ethyl-1,3-propanediol, N-hydroxyethylurea, N-methyl-D-glucourea, and combinations thereof.
24. (New) The aqueous polymer composition of claim 16 further comprising an emulsion polymer.
25. (New) The aqueous polymer composition of claim 16 further comprising a solution polymer.
26. (New) The aqueous polymer composition of claim 16 further comprising a polymer dispersion.
27. (New) The polymer dispersion of claim 25 further comprising a natural or synthetic polymer.
28. (New) The natural polymer of claim 26 further comprising a starch or modified starch.
29. (New) The aqueous-based polymer composition of claim 16 further comprising gels, creams, or lotions.
30. (New) The aqueous polymer composition of claim 16 further comprising from 0.1 to 75 percent by weight of one or more adjuvants, based on total weight of the aqueous polymer composition.